



How Do You Raise a Raisin?

by Pam Muñoz Ryan
illustrated by Craig Brown

Genre

This **expository text** asks questions using rhythm and rhyme. The answers tell all about raisins. What do you want to learn about raisins as you read?



Question of the Week
How do people and nature interact?

Let's
Think
About
Reading!

Why did the author write this text? How do you know?

Important Ideas

How do you **raise** a **raisin**?

Tell me so I'll know.

They're such peculiar little things.

How do they sprout and grow?

Do raisins grow on Earth, or other planets, far away?

Do aliens collect them and space-shuttle them our way?

Raisins are dried grapes. So far, there is no **proof** that raisins grow on other planets. Raisins ARE grown on Earth, in countries like Turkey, Iran, Greece, Australia, and the United States.



So who discovered raisins?

Were they here when Earth began?

Who WAS the first to nibble them—dinosaur or man?

Raisins were probably discovered when someone or someTHING tasted grapes that had dried on the vine. Over the years people and animals figured out which grapes produced the sweetest, yummiest raisins.



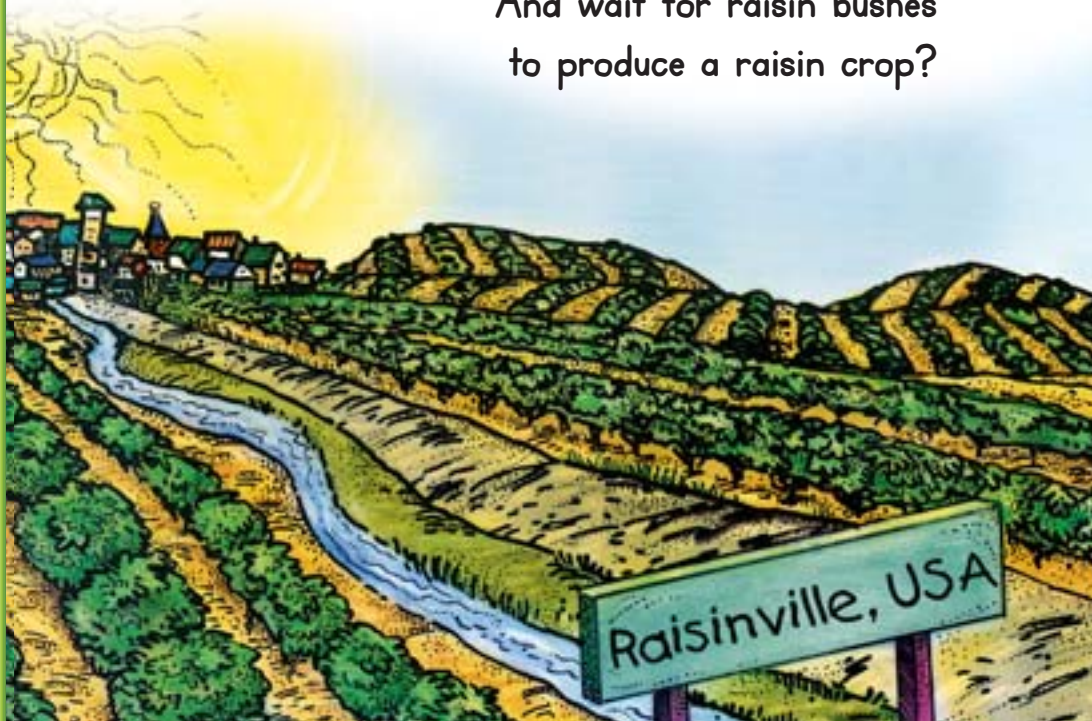
How do grapes become raisins?

Important Ideas

Do raisins grow in **one** place, like Raisin Creek or Raisin Hill? Is there a special town called Raisinfield or Raisinville?

Raisins grow best in **areas** with nice dirt, many days of hot weather, a dry climate, and plenty of water. Almost all of the raisins in the United States are grown in the San Joaquin Valley of California, near towns like Chowchilla, Dinuba, Kingsburg, Selma, Weedpatch, and even Raisin City! About 90 percent of the raisins sold in the United States come from the area around Fresno, California.

Do farmers plant some seeds from the local garden shop? And wait for raisin bushes to produce a raisin crop?



Farmers start a new crop of raisins by taking “cuttings” from an older **grapevine**. These pieces of stem are planted in sand until they sprout. Then, they are planted in the fields, next to a wooden stake.

Notice how the grapevines and the sprawling branches grow. Does a grapevine tamer train them into picture-perfect rows?



Grapevines are grown about eight feet apart. Fieldworkers hand-tie the sturdy branches, or “canes,” to rows of wire. There are usually two sets of wire, a top set that is about six feet high, and a second wire that is three or four feet high.

How long do raisins take to grow?
A week, a month, or a year?
How many hours must you wait
for a raisin to appear?

It takes at least three years until the vines
are old enough for the first crop of raisins.
That's 26,280 hours!

When grapes are ripe and ready,
how do farmers get them down?
Do they rent a burly giant
to shake them to the ground?



Let's **Think** About...

How does the short poem and the art compare and contrast with the real explanation?

Important Ideas

When grapes are ready, skilled grape-pickers snag the grape clusters from the vines using a sharp vine-cutter.



Let's **Think** About...

How are raisins dried?

Important Ideas

Most grapes are turned into raisins the same way they've been for thousands of years: they are left to dry naturally in the sun.

What do raisins lie on
while they're basking in the sun?
Do they rest on little beach towels
until they're dried and done?

The grape clusters are laid on brown paper trays on the ground between the grapevine rows. This is called "laying the grapes down." The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Most raisin growers plant their vineyards in east-to-west rows. This way, grapes drying between the rows receive the most sun. If they were drying in north-to-south rows, the grapes would be in the shade part of the day, and when it comes to raising raisins, the more sun the better.

Let's **Think** About...

How is the placement of grapevine rows important?

Important Ideas



How long do clusters lie around
to sweeten, dry, and bake?
How many weeks in the valley heat
does raising-making take?

Raisins bake in the sun for about two to three weeks. Then, the paper trays are rolled into bundles that look like burritos and are left in the field for a few more days to make sure that all the raisins are as dry.



Let's **Think** About...

What do your fingertips look like when you have been bathing or swimming for a long time?

Background Knowledge

Raisins do not look like grapes—they're withered up and wrinkled! Are they soaked inside a bathtub until their skin is crinkled?

As grapes bake in the hot sun, their water evaporates. The more water they lose, the more the grapes shrivel, causing wrinkles.



How many grapes must a farmer dry upon the valley ground?
To make a box of raisins that weighs about one pound?

It takes about four and one-half pounds of fresh grapes to make one pound of raisins.



How do the raisins get from fields to the raisin factory door?
Does a vacuum cleaner suck them up from the dusty valley floor?

Farmworkers toss the raisin bundles into a wooden trailer. The raisins are sent across a shaker that gets rid of the dirt and rocks. Then, raisins are taken to the factory and stored in big boxes, called bins, until they are ready to be packaged.

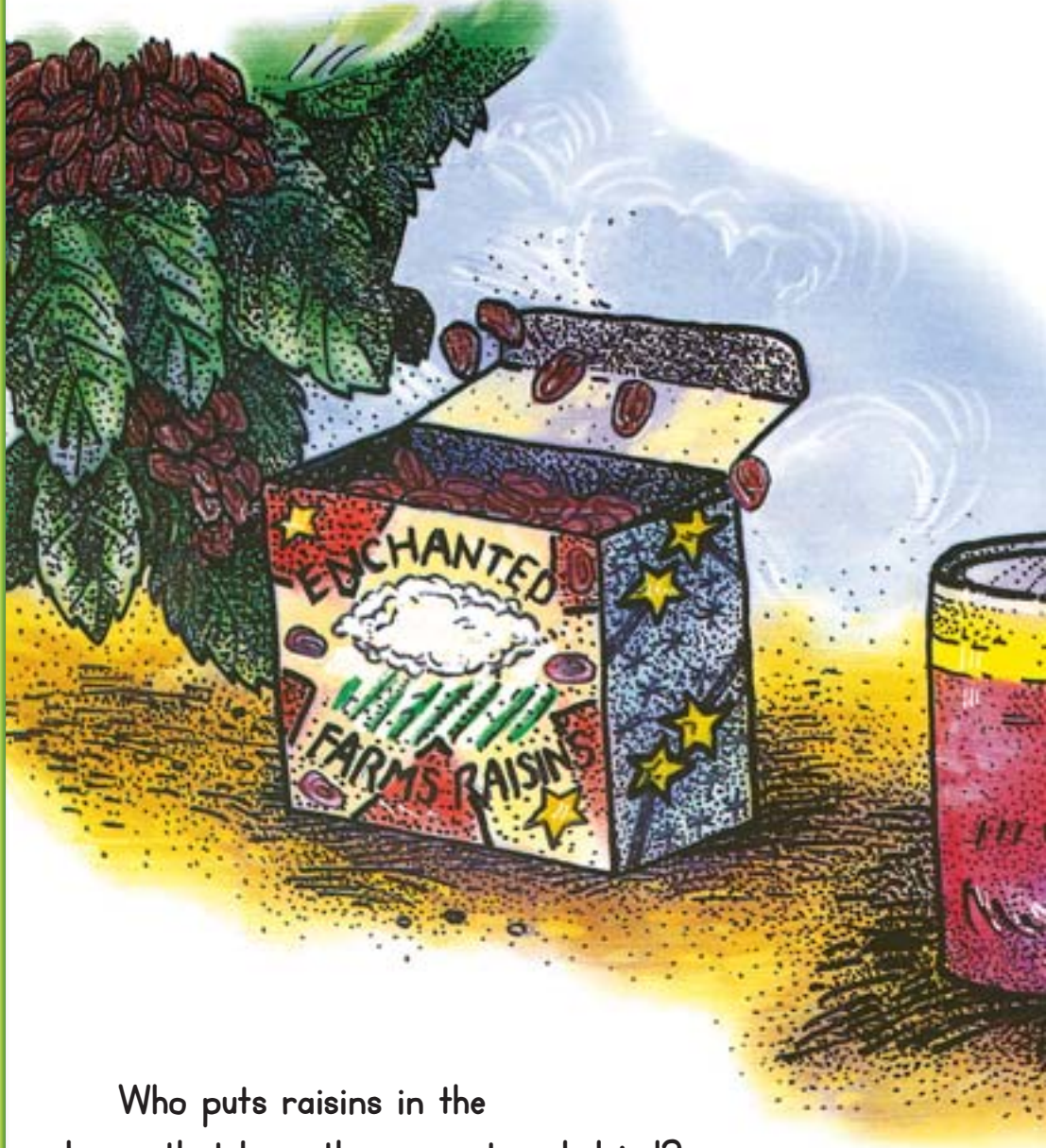
Let's **Think** About...

How does this art help you understand the text?

Important Ideas

Let's **Think** About...

Can you imagine what is happening here? **Visualize**

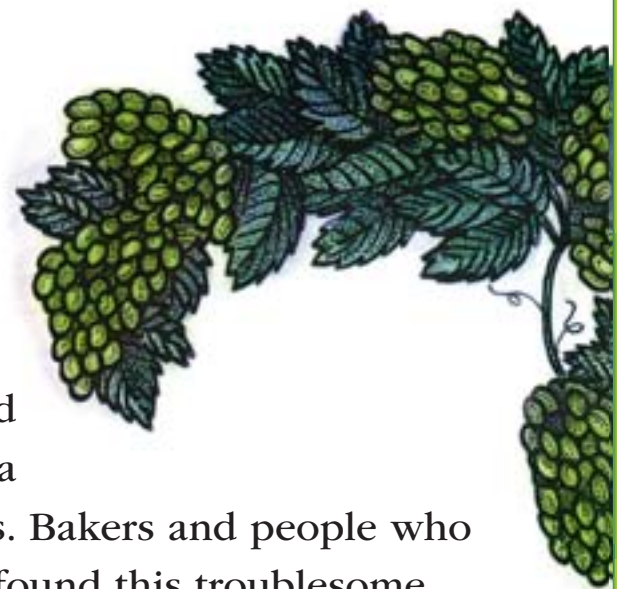


Who puts raisins in the
boxes that keep them sweet and dried?
Do tiny fairy princesses stuff each one inside?

When they're needed, raisin bins are
brought into the factory for packaging. It
takes only 10 minutes from bin to package!
Workers and machines take off the stems and
capstems, sort, and wash the raisins. Then
the raisins are packaged in a variety of boxes
and bags.

Over the years,
raising raisins
flourished, but
raisin seeds were
a problem. When
seeds were removed
the raisins became a
sticky, clumpy mess. Bakers and people who
liked to eat raisins found this troublesome.
They hoped for a seedless grape that would
produce a yummy raisin.

In 1876, William Thompson
introduced the Lady de Coverly
grape to California. The green
grapes were seedless, with
thin skins, and produced
a sweet and flavorful raisin.
These grapes changed the
raisin-producing industry
forever and are still known
today as Thompson
Seedless grapes. Today
95 percent of the
California raisin crop
is Thompson Seedless
grapes.



Let's **Think** About...

Why is the art of a
man holding green
grapes important?
Who is the man?

**Important
Ideas**



What's so great about raisins, anyway?

- They're nutritious. Raisins are rich in iron, calcium, potassium, and B vitamins and provide a good source of fiber.
- They make other foods taste better. Raisins have tartaric acid, a flavor-enhancer. Raisin juice and raisin paste are used in a variety of sauces such as pasta, barbecue, and steak sauces to boost their flavor.
- Raisin paste is sometimes used as filler in meatballs and meat pies to provide more servings.
- Raisins have a rich, natural color. Raisin juice is often added to frozen dairy desserts and baked goods as a color-enhancer, or food coloring.
- Ground raisins can be used instead of fat in fat-free baked goods like fat-free muffins, cookies, and brownies.
- Raisin paste and raisin juice concentrate are mold-inhibitors that prevent food from spoiling as easily. Bakers often use raisin products instead of **artificial preservatives**. Raisins extend the shelf life of bakery goods by several days over products without raisin products.

Let's **Think** About...

Why are raisins an important food?

Summarize

Follow These Steps

Ants on a Log

Spread celery

pieces with peanut

butter, cream cheese, or cheese spread.

Top with raisins.



Rats on a Raft

Spread cream cheese on graham crackers.

Dot raisins on top.



Super Balls

1 cup honey

1½ cups powdered milk

1 cup peanut butter

1½ cups graham cracker crumbs

1 cup raisins

¾ cup crushed cornflakes or dried coconut

Put crushed corn flakes or coconut in a dish.

In a mixing bowl, mix all other ingredients.

Shape into balls.

Roll balls in crushed

cornflakes or coconut.



Let's **Think** About...

What can you make with raisins?

Important Ideas